



Access & Excellence **NEWS RELEASE**

University Relations

1500 University Drive
Billings, MT 59101-0298
Phone: (406) 657-2266 Fax: (406) 657-2264

**U.S. DEPT. OF LABOR AWARDS \$2 MILLION IN SECOND COMPETITION FOR PRESIDENT'S
COMMUNITY-BASED JOB TRAINING GRANTS
TO MSU BILLINGS COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY'S "ENERGY FOR TOMORROW" GRANT**

**BUILDING MONTANA'S ENERGY WORKFORCE THROUGH CREATION OF ENERGY WORKFORCE
TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT CENTER**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACTS: John Cech, Dean, MSUB College of Technology, 670-0848
Lisa Skriner, Partnership & Strategic Alliance, MSUB College of Technology, 247-3055
Shelley Van Atta, University Relations, 657-2268

MSU BILLINGS NEWS SERVICE – Montana State University Billings received notice today from U.S. Department of Labor Assistant Secretary Emily DeRocco, that the MSU Billings College of Technology was awarded a nearly \$2 million "Energy for Tomorrow" grant to build Montana's energy workforce through the creation of an Energy Workforce Training and Development Center.

The U.S. Department of Labor awarded 72 community college partnerships \$125 million for successfully competing under the President's Community-Based Job Training Grants initiative in the high-growth, high-demand energy industry. A total of 429 entries were submitted in response to a competition announced July 3.

The \$1,998,885 received by the MSUB College of Technology will allow it and its business and community partners to develop and offer educational programs and workforce training opportunities to expand the availability of qualified workers to staff the growing energy sector in Montana, and to support the educational needs of the State of Montana WIRED (Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development) initiative to advance the development of biofuels, natural and renewable resources.

Partners with the MSU Billings College of Technology include Dawson Community College in Glendive, Mont., state workforce agencies, employers and industry-related organizations, and K-12 educational institutions. Some of these include the Governor's office, Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education, Montana Economic Development Authority, Montana Department of Commerce, Montana Manufacturing Extension Center, and some of the many individual business and industry private sector partners, local schools, School District 2, Billings Job Service, Big Sky Economic Development Authority/Economic Development Corporation, MDU, PPL Montana, Stillwater Mining, ConocoPhillips, ExxonMobile, Westmoreland Coal Company, Western Energy, Nance Petroleum, Northwestern Energy, Ballard Petroleum, Bull Mountain Energy, and other economic development organizations.

Training and capacity-building activities planned to address this need include developing an industry-driven model for just-in-time training programs in the energy industry, including mining, oil and gas exploration and production, power generation, biofuels, bioproduct development, renewable resources and energy-related construction. Specific skills include: welding, diesel, hydraulics, pipeline construction, mining technology, surveying, geographic information systems (GIS), global positioning satellite (GPS), instrumentation, process operations and control. This will be accomplished through short-term workforce training, delivery of certified training programs, and expansion of certificate and two-year degree programs designed to address serious workforce needs in these industries. The grant will build on efforts of the state's WIRED Initiative. The grant also will enable the increase in capacity in the programs of welding technology (at both the MSUB COT and Dawson), diesel technology offered at the MSUB COT, process plant technology (MSUB COT), the development of a power plant technology degree at the MSU Billings COT, and an engineering technology associate of applied science degree at Dawson. Career-readiness and awareness programs beginning at the middle school level, and tech prep programs at the high school level, will help keep enrollment in these programs robust. The expected impact over the grant period is a total of 1,010 students trained in the energy industry by spring, 2009.

Leveraged resources: In addition to significant in-kind or partnership contributions to program success, various industry and economic development groups have donated a total of \$906,832 to assist with curriculum development, material needs, and training opportunities. Partners have committed to sending workers for retraining, hiring graduates, serving on the grant's Advisory Council, sharing industry expertise and participating in job fairs. Agreements for tech prep arrangements will be developed with high schools in all locations.

According to John Cech, dean of the MSU Billings College of Technology, "Our goal is to train more students as energy industry sector opportunities grow. Energy development is a critical component to keep our state and nation competitive in the global economy. This Energy Workforce Training and Development Center, paired with Montana's resources and future bioproduct development, will further that objective.

"There is more potential for energy development from existing and untapped sources in Montana than any other state in the nation," continued Cech. Citing the Montana Department of Commerce, he noted Montana is first in the nation in coal resources and reserves, with nearly 120 billion tons; is the sixth largest producer of coal; fifth in the nation for wind energy potential; was eighth in oil wells drilled in 2003; and is the nation's primary source for Platinum and Palladium Mineral Group mining. (Source: Census and Economic Information Center, Montana Dept. of Commerce, 2005)

Dr. Ronald P. Sexton, Chancellor of Montana State University Billings and board chairman for the Big Sky Economic Development Authority, said, "Montana's energy sector is growing and trained workforce needs are great. We are very excited by the incredible partnerships this grant will facilitate, including those with Dawson Community College, Big Sky Economic Development Authority, Montana Department of Commerce, Montana Manufacturing Extension Center, numerous private sector individual business and industry partners, local schools, and local and regional economic development organizations.

"Montana is facing tremendous workforce challenges and we are committed to developing our own talent. This grant will provide a significant head start in helping to respond to local and regional energy workforce training needs," noted Sexton. "This is but one more way in which Montana State University Billings and its College of Technology have worked to further workforce development needs for our state and region."

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